

News from Honbu



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Sensei's Corner

By Toshishiro Obata

The October seminar in Europe was an hour away from Amsterdam at the Nunspeet dojo, hosted Alec and Walter Sensei. The seminars in the Netherlands and Switzerland (hosted by Josef Sensei) went really well, and I can see that the level of the students has improved.

I visited Batavia, an old ship that dates back 400 years ago. In movies, I never really understood what a ship looked like, but my visit to Batavia taught me a lot. In Switzerland, I saw the castle Schloss Lenzburg (the castle's name). I also visited a small castle in Laufenburg, a beautiful city between Germany and Switzerland. The castle in Laufenburg was the 40th castle I have seen since 1995.

On a really sunny day, Josef Sensei from Switzerland took me to Schilthorn, and we ate lunch on the mountain. The restaurant there turns around 360 degrees, Josef Sensei always thinks of interesting things to do. Next year will be my 10th year visiting Europe, this time at the Oktober fest in Germany. I wish that Shinkendo continues to grow in Europe.

*Itou o okoseba sento ga tomoru
Itou o utsuseba sento ga utsuru.*

If one fire is lit, it can light a thousand torches.
If one torch is moved to another location, a thousand more torches can be lit.

The weekend after I came back from Europe, James Huang, Michael Shu, Masaji Saito, and I participated in a shoot for the History Channel (for a Samurai documentary). I also had a million e-mails to catch up on but I finished responding to them all. Next weekend, the Honbu dojo will demonstrate at the Orchid Show in Little Tokyo (October 18th & 19th).

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Obata Kaiso in Switzerland

Interview with Howard Quick Sensei

by Sammy Briggs Sensei of Hokuzan Dojo

In recent years, Shinkendo has grown in leaps and bounds. While the older shibu continue to thrive and grow, newer shibu have begun in Australia, New York and throughout Europe. In order to keep tabs on who's who in the Federation, we thought it would be beneficial to start an "Instructor Profile" in the newsletter.



Our first "feature" instructor is Howard Quick Sensei from Australia. Quick Sensei was born in Melbourne, Australia on October 6, 1969.

Could you tell us about your martial arts experience prior to beginning Shinkendo?

When I was 8 yrs old, my family moved to Malaysia for two years (my father was in the Royal Australian Air Force and was posted to Malaysia). It was while we were in Malaysia that I acquired an interest for the Martial/Asian fighting arts. A school friend of mine was studying Karate and asked me to come along and give it a

try. I trained for about six months before we were posted back to Melbourne, Australia (it was enough to whet the appetite).

It wasn't until I was 16 years old that I resumed my training. I was a regular at a local gym (pushing weights) when one of the gym instructors told me about a martial art he was studying called Jujutsu. As soon as I started, I knew I had found the art for me. I became addicted, training five days a week, and have done so ever since (I have a very understanding wife). I have twice traveled to Europe for three months at a time on jujutsu training trips (1996 & 1997) with the late Jan De Jong Soke (Tsutsumi Hozan Ryu), whom many consider to have been one of the best jujutsu instructors of the 20th Century. These trips consisted of training almost every day for about four hours at a time.

I still train at the John Beckman School of self-defense (Senjutsu Ryu Jujitsu), as I always have, and currently hold a 4th Dan.

Has training in Shinkendo had any influence on your jujutsu?

My training in jujutsu and my training in Shinkendo have both had influences on each other. Our jujutsu system is very dynamic and very self-defense oriented, and in my opinion due to its very strong basics, works very effectively. I believe Shinkendo to be the same. A lot of people have said to me how basic the sword work looks but when they have tried it they always say how difficult it is to actually do. Both systems are very efficient and practical, no flashy movement as you see in a lot of systems nowadays, just straight to the point, but they are both so extremely vast and complex that you will never stop learning.

One example in which Shinkendo has had a lot of influence over the system of jujutsu that I study goes back to when Paul Pocock Sensei performed a Shinkendo demonstration at our Annual General Meeting for the Australian Jujitsu Association in Sydney in 1996. When my jujutsu instructor saw how quickly the sword could be used in the hands of a competent swordsman, he removed all of the sword techniques from our jujutsu syllabus. His exact words were, "We don't know how to use a sword, and there is no way you could defend against that...you would get killed."

One other and quite extraordinary way (to me anyway) in which Shinkendo has had an influence over my jujutsu, is that now my jujutsu instructor of 18 years is one of my Shinkendo students. This is still taking some getting used to.

Obata Soke gave a seminar in Australia a few years back. Was this your first exposure to Shinkendo?



As I hadn't been training in Shinkendo for long, Obata Soke's seminar was the first time I had witnessed the Japanese sword being used by the founder himself. I had seen sword demonstrations before but they were mostly circus type acts: cutting fruit on peoples necks, etc. I didn't actually attend the training part of the seminar, as I didn't believe I was ready for it, but in hindsight I wish I had.

Any advice for those who are just beginning their studies in Shinkendo or martial arts?

The only advice I could give someone who is just starting their 'journey' into the Shinkendo/Martial Arts life is give it time. It is not only my opinion that there is no better school of Japanese swordsmanship, so if you have started training in Shinkendo don't stop. As for other martial arts, find one and stick to it...too many people out there are just 'collecting' dan grades. You can't expect to become proficient at an art if you are trying to study six different styles at once. You need to find the right art for you and let it become a way of life (you also need to have a very understanding wife, husband, or partner).

Where would you like to see Shinkendo Australia in the near future?

I would like to see Shinkendo become the most prominent sword system in Australia. In time I intend to spread it to the other states of Australia. I currently have two students in South Australia who regularly travel to Melbourne for instruction, as well as hosting seminars for which I make the trip to Mt. Gambier (South Australia). However, at the moment I am trying to build a decent foundation on which we can grow. We currently have approximately 25 students and are growing all of the time. We perform regular demonstrations and are becoming well known throughout Victoria as well as Australia. Much of this I owe to my Jujutsu instructor John Beckman Shihan, as he is the President of the Australian Jujitsu Association and a great friend and mentor. He has the necessary contacts and has helped me in every way possible to promote Shinkendo Australia and to keep it running and prospering. Without his guidance I would not have started training in Jujutsu and therefore would probably not have ever begun my studies in Shinkendo.



Australia Dojo, Altona West Primary School

Thank you, Quick Sensei, for your time. Anyone wishing to contact Quick Sensei can do so at shinkendoaustralia@bigpond.com.



Everything I Need to Know...

By Marlene Harris

...about persistence, I learned from a *kitten*. Yes, you read that right. No, I've not gone mad—at least not completely (yet...).

Background: a dojo acquaintance got into a messy domestic situation with a roommate, and needed someone to care for his kitten while he got his affairs in order. Because we have 2 older (read: “entrenched”) housecats, we weren't too keen on this idea. We knew full well how stubbornly arrogant older cats can be about their place within a household, and that our two would-be “shoguns” would be far less than enthusiastic about this plan. However, as the options were scarce, time was of the essence, and the alternatives grim, we reluctantly agreed and brought our foster charge home to meet its new “kin”. You don't need to be a psychic to predict the results. In a nutshell, our household is now as factionally divided as 16th century Japan.

However, in between melees, I've learned a great deal about persistence from the renegade interloper, a small, unassuming creature named “Yhetti” (so branded due to the size of her paws—the owner felt that “Bigfoot” was a little harsh). Despite the malicious zeal of her much larger and far more experienced tormentors who growl, hiss, snarl, and swipe at her every chance they get, little Yhetti simply bounces on her merry way undaunted, sometimes ignoring them completely, and at others, lightheartedly bounding up to them to see if perchance they've “gotten over themselves” yet.

Here's a splendid snapshot of this perseverance: one of our 2 hapless shoguns (Bungee) was lying in rather close proximity to Yhetti ready to pounce, baring his teeth, snarling, growling, and hissing for all he was worth. Despite his display of “game face” and best stalking moves, her reaction to this was to simply ignore him, and continue to happily play with a couple of toys as if he didn't exist. The louder he became, the more vigorously she romped and rolled around. After a short time, not having the intended effect, he quieted down and continued to just lie there with a sour demeanor while Yhetti merrily played on. At this point it occurred to me that for poor Bungee, he not only didn't win, he actually lost twofold. Not only was he unable to usurp the joy of the moment and assert his sovereignty, but, in adhering to his sullen and angry disposition, he lost out on the opportunity for positive engagement himself—the cat equivalent to “shooting himself in the foot”.



Now at this juncture, you may be wondering what this little vignette has to do with training. Glad you asked! Having been in Shinkendo for some time, I've watched a number of individuals of who, sadly, allow themselves to become discouraged and defeated because of the attitudes, actions, and/or position(s) of others. They hiss, fret, and agonize over the fact that there are those who are bigger, “badder”, better, louder, or more experienced, have more “status” or whatever, and give up because they think they “can't compete”. As a result of this mistaken impression that training is some sort of “competition”, everyone loses. The individual loses the opportunity to learn, grow, and gain more skill and insight. The dojo loses a valuable training partner as well as whatever other potentials the individual has yet to develop and bring to the local training table in the future. The art loses a unique addition to the larger body in terms of the energy, personality, and perspective of the individual.

So, the take-home message here is this: be like Yhetti. Let your own internal sense of wonder and delight in training and in life hold sway, and simply ignore any ‘Bungees’ on the dojo mat and on the mat of life in general. As with in the case of Bungee and Yhetti, to the victor go the spoils, and as Bungee sadly discovered, the true spoils of engagement don't lie in securing one's way through negative posturing or a perceived sense of “entitlement”, but rather in the moments of doing, discovering, of being actively and positively immersed and involved. Further, the victorious aren't necessarily the strongest, the most skilled or experienced, the most aggressive, the loudest, or the loftiest. They are those who see an activity for what it truly is, one among many, and persist. They persist because it is simply something that they like and choose to do for its own sake, something that they value in their own way, and for their own sense of positive purpose related to it.

PS—as of this writing, “Yhetti the Conquerer” is continuing her campaign of “victory through quiet, undaunted continuation” and is gradually winning the larger war—the other two are acquiescing. I guess an old axiom is true: living well and in one's own way is the best form of revenge....



Japanese Culture and Budo

By Nathan Scott

Budo is generally understood to mean “Japanese martial arts”. There have been debates over whether it is possible to correctly transmit *budo* outside of Japan without conveying Japanese culture along with it. Most experienced *budo-ka* agree that not including aspects of the culture would change the arts to the point of losing critical teachings, since cultural thinking, etiquette and habits are deeply intertwined with *budo*. Removing the culture would obscure the context of the traditional teachings, which would in turn, confuse the “*ria*” (purpose and meaning). Not only would the traditional methods of a given *budo* be lost or misunderstood, but so would any modern applications or adaptations of the given techniques. Therefore, understanding the fundamentals of Japanese culture eventually becomes a necessary element of student development and initiation in regards to the pursuit of *budo*.

In most cases, the pertinent Japanese culture can be transmitted to students via correct, traditional teaching of *budo* by a qualified instructor. However, there are a number of Japanese cultural festivals and events, from the obscure to the popular, which can be observed together with the members of any given dojo. Celebrating such events not only enhances cultural understanding, but also provides a venue for classmates to interact outside of day-to-day dojo practice.

In consideration of the current season, the following are notes on the Japanese Moon viewing celebration, as well as a brief mention of the flower viewing celebration observed in Spring. A more detailed account of cherry blossom viewing will be offered in the March or April newsletter.

Tsuki-mi (Jugo-ya) – September is usually the month for *Tsuki-mi* (月見), or, Moon Viewing. This is also known by the alternate name “*Jugo-ya*” (十五夜 – 15th day). However, the “15th day” DOES NOT refer to the 15th of September, contrary to the popular belief of many, but rather to the 15th day of August according to the lunar (moon) calendar. Therefore, the actual day of *tsuki-mi* changes every year, but usually falls sometime in the month of September according to the Western calendar. In any event, the harvest moon is always the full moon closest to the Autumnal Equinox, and is usually large and very bright.

For those that enjoy viewing the moon, any time is a good time for “*tsuki-mi*”, but the most beautiful moon is that of *Jugo-ya*, which is the Harvest Moon (*Chushu no Meigetsu* - 中秋の名月). On this day, an offering of *tsuki-mi dango* (rice cakes) and seasonal fruits and vegetables; such as *suika* (watermelons), *kuri* (chestnuts), *satoimo* (Japanese potato), etc. are traditionally offered to the moon in thanks for a plentiful harvest season.



Tsuki Kage Dojo - Tsuki-mi 2002

The Harvest Moon marks the end of the harvest season, so Japanese farmers would celebrate the moon on this day as an expression of thanks. Farmers would hold a harvest festival called a *meigetsukai* (名月会 – harvest moon celebration), which is basically the same type of celebration as *tsuki-mi*.

Interestingly, there are two other celebrations that occur at almost the same times as *tsuki-mi* and the Spring celebration, *hana-mi* (花見 – flower viewing, held in March/April), and share a certain amount of relation to each other.

(continued)



Aki no nanakusa (秋の七草) refers to the seven “grasses” of autumn. These are: *susuki* (pampas grass), *hagi* (bush clover), *kuzu* (vine), *nadeshiko* (fringed pink), *ominaeshi* (a perennial, yellow flower), *fujibakama* (thoroughwort) and *kikyo* (Chinese bellflower). These and other symbols of autumn are often used to decorate the offering table during *tsuki-mi*.

Inside houses, *tsuki-mi dango* are piled up and *aki no nanakusa* arranged on a small stand or a table near a window that is in view of the moon.

Tsuki-mi was borrowed originally from China during the *Heian* period, but unfortunately, is now an almost forgotten custom in Japan. The Chinese 'Mid-Autumn Festival' (Aka: Moon Cake Festival, or, *Chung Chiu*) is held on the same day as *tsuki-mi*, and is currently more popular in China than *tsuki-mi* is in Japan.

There are a few Japanese folk tales that may come to mind around this time of the year. Sometimes stories such as these are recited during autumn celebrations:

Tsukiyo no Usagi (月夜の兎 - The Rabbit on the Moon). A well-known legend amongst Japanese people, and is also one of the most traditional imageries of Japan. Essentially, the story is about the self-sacrifice of a rabbit, who later ascended to the moon so that humans would remember its selfless act forever. The rabbit is often associated with *tsuki-mi* celebrations because of the love Japanese have for this story.

Taketori Monogatari (竹取物語 - The Story of the Moon Princess). Another seasonal folk tale, and the oldest folk story in Japan. *Kaguya Hime*, the “moon princess”, is said to have been born from a stalk of bamboo. She later grew up to be a very beautiful woman, and the object of desire for a number of men. However, she was apparently “from the moon” originally, and was recalled back to the moon before taking any of them as a husband.



Tsuki Kage Dojo - Tsuki-mi 2003



Tsuki Kage Dojo - Kan'o-kai 2003

Tsuki-mi (September) and *Hana-mi* (March/April) are two events that have fallen from popularity in Japan over the years, but because of their close association to budo and the *Tsuki Kage* (“Moon Shadow”) *Dojo* specifically, we continue to celebrate these two events, and hope to be a part of reviving these traditions here in America.

Tsuki Kage Dojo began holding *tsuki-mi* and *kan'o-kai* (観桜会 - cherry blossom viewing) annual celebrations about two years ago. We've found these events to be enjoyable times, and useful for providing a forum outside of *keiko* to ask about and discuss budo related issues. Enjoy!

Obata Sensei in Atlanta

By Shawn Forristall, Atlanta Budokan



The Atlanta Budokan hosted our annual seminar with Toshishiro Obata Kaiso September 5th -7th. First I would like to thank Obata Sensei again for his time, leadership, and for his lifelong dedication to teaching something that has brought so much to all of us here in Atlanta.

The seminar was attended by over 45 students and instructors. I would like to thank our affiliated Atlanta dojos for their support: Nayef Smith Sensei (Japanese Swordsmanship of Gwinnett), Lionel Jones Sensei (Cartersville), and

Mary Giles (Mind, Body, and Spirit). This year the entire weekend went flawlessly from beginning to end. This would not have been possible without the dedication of all of our senior students. We truly have an incredible group of individuals which make up our school.



As always the training was enjoyed by everyone. This year besides aikido and Shinkendo, Obata Sensei spent a great deal of time on bojutsu material. He reviewed the first two bo katas - *shu shi sho* and *saka gawa sho*. He also taught us the third form in the series - *su ai yoshi*. We do have it on DVD if anyone would like to see it. Obata Sensei also did an impromptu session on tantojutsu strategy, which was one of the many highlights of the weekend.



Make a Funny! – Special Edition

Nisei Week Outtakes

Edited by Michael Shu

The humor section returns and returns with a vengeance! Muhahahahahah! <Uncontrollable evil laughter continues for a few more minutes>

Anyway, everybody knows that when making a movie or shooting lots of photographs there are bits and pieces that people would rather throw out, whether it is a badly taken image or just plain embarrassing.

These images usually find their way into the black hole of “Don’t ask, don’t tell”. But I have made it my personal responsibility to tell all! Muhahahahah!!!! <More uncontrollable evil laughter>

		
Matthew in pain, or singing?	James having an Aneurism	Limber as a monkey
		
James's bokuto suddenly scares him	Always tome or get a nasty surprise	Work, the reason I've been missing so much Shinkendo
		
Ouch	Owie	Okay, this is getting old
		
James the narcoleptic		

As you can see, the winner of our “Honbu’s Funniest Photo Subject” would be James Huang. Everybody give him a round of applause... but doing so while reading a newsletter would make you look crazy so just take note that James is a master of facial expressions. If anybody wants to see him on the big-screen, rent “ID4”. That’s right; James is the SETI nerd playing golf. So... you may notice a gap on the right over there... my lack of editorial skill has left me with that gaping black hole. But let’s fill it in with your submissions for the next one... if I don’t get sacked for making fun of James.

A Harmony in Rotation

By Jonathan M. King, Honbu Jiho

While seamlessly traveling through voluminous amounts of information on the nature of GO and how to play, I realized that a simple understanding of GO and how it relates to battlefield mechanics would not be sufficient to my understanding of the universe. Furthermore, by not having any proficiency at the game, I have decided that in order to relate GO and universe I will have to spend considerable time playing the game, in addition to explaining the nature of how a battlefield operates.

Time to crack open the history books, go over my battlefield commands (I'll have to learn them in Japanese since I only know them in English and Gaelic), and find a worthy Uke who would like to play GO with me. This being said my next task will be to relate GO and the universe, but before this can happen we will have to come to truly understand the battlefield.

Until then here are the answers to our questions asked last month. I calculated these to a significant number of decimal places, but have rounded the answers here for the sake of brevity.

How far apart would the grain of silt and golf ball have to be in order to represent the distance between the Earth and Sun?

4.56 km, (2.85 mi)

How fast are we traveling as the earth is rotating?

1314 km/hr, (1050 mi/hr)

As the earth revolves around the sun?

29.8 km/s, (18.6 mi/s)

As the sun revolves around the galaxy?

220 km/s, (138 mi/s)



This means that depending on the time of day and season we could be traveling anywhere from 190 - 250 km/s, (120-160 mi/s) relative to the galactic center.

New question

If the maximum velocity of our motion through the galaxy is 250 km/s, what fraction of the speed of light is this?

Good Luck! Jinsei Shinkendo.

-Jon

Caught by a Police Officer

Chad Cazeo of Mesa Dojo, AZ

Last night on my way home I was stopped by a police officer.

I was on my way home and was going about 70mph in a 50mph zone. When he turned around, I knew he got me on his radar.



When he approached my vehicle he asked the usual i.e. "do you have any weapons" etc.



I had my bokken in the truck. As we are taught this is a dangerous weapon, I explained to him what I had, and he showed a general curiosity (probably for his own safety).

He went back to his patrol car and ran my license and plates etc.

When he came back to my truck he said "if you show me what this Shinkendo is all about I won't give you a ticket".

Of course I obliged him; I showed him the 5 basic stances and the 8 basic cuts. I also showed him *Goho Battaho*, and some of the basic blocks.

I told him where we train and at what times, so if you see him at the dojo, don't be surprised.

I thought this little story was worth sharing.

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